

Water Voices Panel Draws Large Crowd

September 15, 2015



Panelists Lucinda Merritt, Cynthia Barnett, Jim McFarlane, Robert Ulanowicz

The third event in the lecture series “Water Voices,” “Ethics, Faith, and Water: A Confluence,” was presented last night in High Springs to a full house. This free series is sponsored by the Ichetucknee Alliance, Our Santa Fe River, and the High Springs New Century Woman’s Club. This panel discussion was also sponsored by Robin Frey and Helms Briscoe.

The group was again moderated by Cathy Street of the Ichetucknee Alliance, who introduced the panelists and also conducted the question-and-answer period afterwards.

The panelists were Cynthia Barnett, journalist who has traveled the world in her work, and who has written several books on water, including *Mirage*, *Blue Revolution*, and just recently,

Rain. Barnett, within her overview of water in the world spoke of this country's perception of water as an "illusion of abundance," and the United States' "caring middle," who does show concern for our water when they understand its importance.

Unfortunately, Sister Patricia Siemen, scheduled as a panelist, was unable to attend. She is the director of the Center for Earth Jurisprudence at Barry University Law School in Orlando. Her topic was to be Roman Law and the Encyclicals, touched on by panelist Robert Ulanowicz.

Dr. Robert Ulanowicz is a theoretical ecologist and philosopher who is best known for his search for a unified theory of ecology. He served as Professor of Theoretical Ecology at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's Chesapeake Biological Laboratory in Solomons, Maryland. He has written hundreds of articles and three books: *A Third Window: Natural Life Beyond Newton and Darwin*, (2009); *Ecology: The Ascendant Perspective*, (1997); *Growth and Development – Ecosystems phenomenology*, (1986) Ulanowicz uses techniques from information theory and thermodynamics to study the organization of flows of energy and nutrients within ecosystems. Although his ideas have been primarily applied in ecology, many of his concepts are abstract and have been applied to other areas in which flow networks arise, such as economics. His contributions to the panel, however, were not abstract and included specifics as to the many practical projects his church has done to bring about water awareness to the public.

Jim McFarlane is an educator who served on the Florida Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church's Creation Care Task Force and has been a presenter at the UMC Southeast Jurisdiction Caring for Creation Conference. He spoke about the work done by Gainesville's Trinity United Methodist Church to care for and preserve the large, spring-laden church property, which is the

headwaters of Possum Creek.

Lucinda Faulkner Merritt is an award winning writer who serves on the Ichetucknee Alliance Board of Directors and who brought to the panel the Buddhist concept of interconnection of all things, that water and the Earth and life are all the same and cannot be separated and “we are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.” Merritt also spoke of Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Karmapa, head of the Karma Kagyu school, one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The Karmapa lineage is the most ancient tulku lineage in Tibetan Buddhism, predating the Dalai Lama lineage by more than two centuries.

Merritt also discussed the work of David Groenfeldt, founder of the Water-Culture Institute in New Mexico and author of *Water Ethics: A Values Approach to Solving the Water Crisis*, (2013).

She spoke our need for a new paradigm and new language to express it.

The entire two-hour session was filmed in its entirety by Doug Jipson of Digital Video of Rum 138, Fort White, and will be available for viewing.